

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

(Ms. GABBARD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. GABBARD. Mr. Speaker, our troops, our country, and our communities deserve far better than the defense bill that passed today. The hidden provision in the amended H.R. 3979 to authorize training and arming the so-called moderate Syrian rebels for the next 2 years with no limit on how much money can be spent has seriously polluted this critical piece of legislation.

I could not in good conscience vote to support the so-called moderate forces who often work hand in hand with al Qaeda or ISIS and whose personnel and weapons often end up in the hands of those terrorists. This bill continues the same failed practices of undeclared war, regime change, and nation building that have held us mired in the Middle East for over a decade.

FUNDING THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

(Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, columnist Roger Simon wrote the following in one of the Capitol Hill newspapers several weeks ago:

If you spent 13 years pounding money down a rathole with little to show for it, you might wake up one morning and say, "Hey, I am going to stop pounding money down this rathole."

Unfortunately, the U.S. Government does not think that way. The U.S. Government wakes up every morning and says, "The rathole is looking a little bit empty today, let's pound a few more billion dollars down there." And when that rathole is Afghanistan, the billions are essentially without end.

He added that we have spent several billions trying to stop opium production there but that during U.S. occupation, drug production in Afghanistan has actually increased.

By one very conservative estimate, we have spent \$753 billion on the war in Afghanistan since 2001. The defense bill today contains \$63.7 billion for the overseas contingency account, meaning many billions more for the rathole in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, when will we come to our senses?

UNITED STATES-ISRAEL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP ACT

(Mr. COLLINS of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 2673, United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act.

S. 2673 includes language from the Israel QME Enhancement Act. The Israel QME Enhancement Act is a bill that I sponsored and was supported unanimously by this body. Israel's qualitative military edge is the ability to maintain quality arms against numerically superior odds.

My bill provided for a review of Israel's QME at shorter intervals, from 4 years to 2 years, and I am honored the review language made it into the Strategic Partnership Act. Both pieces of legislation recognize Israel's residence in a neighborhood of bad actors.

Over the decades since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, it has endured several extended armed conflicts with its neighbors. From the Israeli War of Independence in 1948 through Operation Protective Edge, the latest conflict with Hamas, Israel has endured constant threats.

Another constant is that Israel has been able to depend upon the U.S. for military assistance. During the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the U.S. conducted one of the largest airlifts in U.S. history to assist Israel.

Today, we stand on the floor of the House in support of a bill to increase its military assistance and to increase the help to our friend Israel.

DAN RAAB RETIREMENT

(Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, today I want to recognize a good friend and a very important member of my hometown community of Taylorville, Illinois.

Dan Raab, the president and CEO of Taylorville Memorial Hospital, is retiring after 34 years in the healthcare industry. Dan started with Taylorville Memorial Hospital in 1995, when it was known as St. Vincent Memorial—it was also where my wife worked—and has served the community as CEO for 19 years.

With Dan's leadership and dedication, TMH has remained a staple in the Taylorville community. It is Taylorville's largest employer, and TMH has given so much back to the community. As a matter of fact, it spent \$4.9 million in community benefits just in the year 2013 alone.

TMH is one of nine critical access hospitals located in the 13th District of Illinois, and they play a vital role in ensuring that rural communities are served so that our citizens get the health care they deserve.

As Taylorville and central Illinois continue to thrive, I know that TMH will be part of that success, and that is a direct result of Dan Raab's leadership. I want to thank Dan for his 34 years of service and congratulate him on his retirement.

My wife, Shannon, and I wish him and his wife, Mary, and their two children, Joe and Emily, the best of luck in the future and with his retirement.

THE ABLE ACT

(Mr. BARR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARR. Mr. Speaker, as a cosponsor of the Achieving a Better Life Experience Act, also known as the ABLE Act, I rise today to commend the House for yesterday passing this important piece of legislation that will help millions of Americans reach their full potential.

As the brother of a physically disabled sister who has lived with the challenges associated with being physically handicapped—over a dozen surgeries, hip and knee replacements, walking with crutches or walkers and sometimes reliance on a wheelchair—I know how difficult it can be for millions of Americans with disabilities and their families.

I also know from my sister, who graduated from college, went on to seminary, married her college sweetheart, adopted a beautiful little girl, and now serves others as a priest in the Episcopal church, that the challenges associated with being handicapped can be overcome.

The ABLE Act will help ease financial strains faced by millions of Americans with disabilities and their families and help them save for the future by creating tax-free savings accounts available to cover disability-related expenses. This provides families with a severely disabled child some peace of mind by allowing them to save for their child's long-term disability expenses.

We are better off as a Nation when disabled Americans are given tools like the ABLE Act to not only achieve self-sufficiency but to contribute and give back to our society.

THE NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, briefly on the floor of the House today I mentioned how many times I voted for the defense authorization bill and appreciated the underlying principles in that legislation, which is to wholly support the United States military and their families. Today, unfortunately, layered down with poisonous pills on the floor of the House, the majority did not give this Congress the opportunity to debate the questions of war and peace.

So I ask my colleagues and the leadership to let us debate this issue next week, or come back, or, as we begin 2015. Whenever we put our sons and daughters in harm's way, it is extremely important to do so.

Let me change to another topic very quickly and acknowledge and give my